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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2015

Two wins, one campaign manager

When the red wave surged into Niagara on election night, Peter Opdam was at the helm.
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Port's alarming safety issue

More than 70 per cent of the city's homes are not in compliance with smoke and CO detector laws.
Page 8

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Pumped up about food haul



GREG FURNIVALL/
POSTMEDIA
NETWORK
Gaston Desjardins
unloads from a
1948
Mack
fire truck
some of the
tonnes of food
collected
during the Port
Colborne
Lions
Food
Drive. See
story on
page 2.

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UPFRONT

■ **COMMUNITY:** Big turnout to collect for the less fortunate



**GREG FURMINGER/
POSTMEDIA
NETWORK**
Volunteers at
Christian Life
Assembly
sort food
collected
during the Port
Colborne
Lions Food
Drive held
over the
weekend.
Another
drive was
also held in
Welland.

Doorstep donations put food on the table

GREG FURMINGER
Postmedia Network

Kraft Dinner, Oreos cookies, pasta and spaghetti sauces, chicken noodle soup — literally tonnes of it were collected Saturday morning and all good for hundreds of souls.

Small armies of volunteers went door to door in Port Colborne and Welland in search of nourishment for their neighbours who are struggling to put food on the table.

They returned to sorting centres with those staples plus personal hygiene products, baby items and other necessities so many people forego buying at the grocery store simply because so many people can't afford them.

Welland firefighter Derek David and his son, Chayse, were among some 500 volunteers who pitched in for

the Welland Community Food Drive.

"We try to help out every year, and he's doing his community hours for high school," David said after collecting three boxes of food and a sack of potatoes from a home on Donna Marie Drive in the city's west end.

"Most houses are leaving something. They've been pretty generous," he said.

Further north, another group of firefighters and their families were scouring the Bridlewood Drive and Northtown Co-operative Homes neighbourhoods. "We've been doing it for years," said Ann Marie Middleton. "We volunteer as a family."

On this Saturday, the family couldn't have been happier.

"Awesome weather," Middleton said. "Last year it was snowing. We'll take this weather any day."

Welland food drive co-ordinator Monique Finley suggested the partly cloudy skies and slightly above seasonal temperatures worked in favour of the citywide event.

"With the sunshine came extreme generosity this year, in my opinion," she said.

"It was put out there that volunteers were needed, and they came out in droves to help out," she said at the lively sorting centre at Auberge Richelieu.

"I wish more people would come out just to witness this to experience the sense of community."

A similar scene played out at Christian Life Assembly, where food was sorted for the Port Colborne Lions Food Drive.

Organizer and Lion Jeremy Hamm said 17,100 kilograms of food was collected for Port Cares last year — better than average — and

he was hoping for the same Saturday.

About 300 volunteers were working inside the Barrick Road sorting centre or out picking up boxed and bagged crackers and jars of peanut butter and jam.

"There's people who book their vacations around this," Hamm said of those who volunteer annually.

The younger generations who participate, he said, are mentored in what it means to support the community in which they live.

In the sorting centre, volunteers were also doing rough checks for expiration dates.

"Older stuff that needs to be discarded goes to Zoor (Safari Niagara), so nothing will go to waste," Hamm said.

Despite his optimism, Don Baer, who was driving a 1948 Mack fire truck through city streets as Gaston Desjardins filled the back of the vehicle, said his haul appeared to be

down this year.

"I found it slow," he said. "Usually we have the thing stacked full."

Meanwhile, back at the Welland sorting centre on River Road the volunteer brigade could be heard cheering each time a stocked vehicle pulled up to be unloaded.

"I used to do the walking, but I like being here," said Malcolm Leitch, who has been volunteering for the food drive for the past 15 years, starting as a high school teen.

"I like the excitement here," he said.

It seemed to be contagious to Alicia Martin, who worked alongside Leitch building boxes for sorted goods. It was the first time she had volunteered.

"My friend Malcolm inspired me," she said.

The food collected in Welland that was loaded into transport truck trailers will be distributed by Hope Centre,

Open Arms Mission and Salvation Army.

Mark Carl, executive director of the King Street Hope Centre, said the much-needed food will last his agency over the winter, when more people turn for aid while struggling to pay seasonally higher utility bills.

The food provided to clients, he said, is a "gateway into what's going on and causing them poverty." Food aid is typically the starting point to also provide clients assistance with budgeting, finding employment and addressing addictions or mental health issues.

Carl said about 550 individuals turn to his agency's food bank each month — 30 per cent of them being children.

"Without this drive, we wouldn't have food."

greg.furminger@postmedia.ca
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St. Catharines

LOCAL NEWS

■ **POLITICS:** Peter Opdam oversaw both successful Liberal election drives in Niagara

One manager, two winning campaigns

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

When the red wave surged into Niagara on election night, Peter Opdam was at the helm.

As manager of both the region's successful Liberal campaigns, the Port Colborne political aficionado helped to steer the teams of St. Catharines MP Chris Bittle and Niagara Centre MP Vance Badawey to victory.

While he knew it would be a challenge to take on two federal campaigns simultaneously, it was an opportunity Opdam did not want to pass up.

As president of the Niagara Centre Federal Liberal Association and campaign manager to former Liberal MP John Maloney's 2011 campaign, Opdam knew it was likely he'd play a behind-the-scenes role in the 2015 race.

The 27-year-old was first asked to take the lead in Badawey's camp before being asked about his interest in backing Bittle.

"Having the opportunity to go run the campaign and possibly beat one of the top Conservatives around, that's an opportunity that doesn't always present itself," Opdam said, referring to recently ousted St. Catharines MP Rick Dykstra.

He opted to try and balance both, unsure whether a second person would have to

be brought in to help with the important task.

"In the end, I had a strong deputy helping me out in St. Catharines — Charnelle Belliveau. She did a huge amount of the work," Opdam said.

"She took the brunt of the stress off my shoulders a lot of days."

He credited the teams that stood behind both candidates for helping to make the campaigns a success.

"It's not me on my own. It's a team effort," he said.

"If I didn't have such good people on both campaigns assisting, clearly it would not have been possible."

Bittle praised Opdam's "great focus," high energy and organizational skills.

"He is a great campaign manager and was always there when needed," he said.

"We come from different perspectives, so we balance each other out well."

Opdam often provided "good advice and gave me a kick when I needed it, like a good campaign manager does," Bittle said.

"Those are the people I want around me. Not people who will tell me what they think I want to hear, but who will tell me the truth. Peter is definitely that person. We were lucky to have him in St. Catharines."

Bittle called it "an incredible challenge that Peter

stepped up to."

"He hit it out of the park, in my opinion."

For Badawey's campaign, Opdam was critical to all aspects of communication.

He did much of the coordination between the Liberal Party of Canada and the campaign team, and handled many of the technological tasks required, Badawey said.

Opdam was joined, he said, by several other team members who also took on leadership roles to oversee the various communities within Niagara Centre — south St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland and Port Colborne.

It was those hard-working members and the additional responsibilities they took on that allowed Opdam the time to divide his efforts between the two campaigns, Badawey said, calling it a "perfect fit."

"Ultimately, we all worked together as one team for the riding," he said.

"It was a team effort. It wasn't one person running a campaign — everyone ran the campaign. Everyone worked extremely hard — that's an understatement."

Opdam echoed Badawey's comments, hoping to shine a spotlight on the teams that worked tirelessly to garner support for the candidates.

"It's the teams. It really isn't me," he said. "I help set direction. I try to be de-



MARYANNE FIRTH/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Peter Opdam ran the successful campaigns of Liberals Chris Bittle, in St. Catharines, and Vance Badawey, in Niagara Centre, during the recent federal election.

sive and provide advice, but in the end it's the teams that execute. They deserve all the credit in my mind."

Running two campaigns did not come without its challenges.

As Bittle and Badawey have quite differing political pasts — Bittle with little experience and Badawey with a lengthy history — each campaign had its own approach for winning over voters, Opdam said.

While the national message was "real change," the Niagara Centre campaign was instead focused on delivering results, he said.

"(Badawey) has a long history of delivering results for Port Colborne (as former mayor) and for Niagara as a regional councillor, so we

built on that."

Bittle, on the other hand, despite his community involvement, "was a relative political unknown," Opdam said.

"In St. Catharines, it was about real change. It was about taking on the Harper decade, taking on Rick Dykstra, who's been there with the Harper decade, and trying to contrast that," he said.

"In Niagara Centre, we had a bit of a different beast to slay — the NDP."

Trying to balance the different messages in each riding did prove a bit tricky, Opdam said, particularly while working to continually adapt to the national campaign.

It was in September when

both campaigns "really took off," he said.

When election day arrived, extra helping hands were brought in from Liberal Party of Canada to get the vote out in Niagara Centre "because I couldn't be in two places at once," Opdam quipped.

On election night, Opdam made the strategic decision to remain in St. Catharines with Bittle.

"We knew the race was extremely tight," he said, and there was worry it may come down to a legal issue if the candidates were only separated by a handful of votes.

With the election over, Opdam has taken a position as Bittle's special assistant and office manager — a job based in Ottawa.

"It's a role he said he's honoured to take on."

"I like a challenge and it will be exciting to be part of an amazing team, supporting a great MP and helping to bring about some of the key projects St. Catharines is looking to achieve in the coming years," he said.

"I am a person who thrives on public service. Serving your community is one of the highest callings and if I can play even a small part to make things better for those around me, then I have succeeded in my role."

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Enhancements coming to waste management

BRIAN BATY

For Postmedia Network

We are expecting an announcement later this year from the provincial government concerning new rules for waste management.

We do not know if the changes will lead to expansions of responsibilities for local governments or more responsibilities for the producers of products ... more on this as legislation is introduced. However, at the regional level, we are introducing some changes which we expect will increase our waste diversion rates, earn more potential income and be better received by the citizens.

If you have ever attended a household hazardous waste event, then you will probably know the frustration of long line-ups and, in many cases, on days that are inconvenient for you. You will be pleased to learn that we are phasing out this practice and establishing permanent household hazardous waste centres.

We, in Pelham, already have access to our facility but it is located in Grimsby, which is a fair trek down the road for many.

The Humberstone landfill in Welland is soon to have this enhanced service all days that the landfill is open. A similar permanent depot will be located in Thorold at the region's property close to the Walker Brothers landfill. A drop-off

location will also be established in Port Erie.

Many of the materials are sold and the anticipated growth in diversion should cover most of the extra costs of having these permanent facilities and take much frustration off the backs of taxpayers as they will no longer endure the inconvenience of the household hazardous waste drop-off days.

Again, in the interest of service and improved diversion, the region's website www.nlagararegion.ca has an enquiry service on the home page to allow new homeowners to find out about their waste pickup options. You simply enter your community, street and number to retrieve this information.

Better than this simple service, you can screen a long list of items to determine the proper method of disposal: garbage, blue box, grey box or the green bin recycling. In some cases it is unclear which disposal option is correct. Check out egg cartons or fireplace ashes to see which option is recommended. For families with young children, you might make a game out of this exercise to better inform your family and to create more citizens who are sensitive to the proper treatment of waste and the various options for disposal.

Brian Baty is a Pelham regional councillor and a member of Niagara's waste management steering committee. baty@nlagararegion.ca



Algoma Montreals enters Welland Canal Lock 6 for the last time, on Dec. 27, 2014, as photographed by Skip Gillham.

Shipwrecks — Algoma Montreals

SKIP GILLHAM

For Postmedia Network

The *Algoma Montreals* came down the Welland Canal for the final time on Dec. 27, 2014.

The ship had been using the waterway since 1962 but was headed into retirement when the voyage ended.

Originally known as *Montreals*, the vessel served in both the Papaichristidis and Upper Lakes Shipping fleets. It was built, in two sections, at Montreal and joined on the Champlain Drydock at Lauzon, Que.

Montreals survived several scrapes over the years but the worst was a head-on collision with *Algobay* on the foggy St. Clair River on June 25, 1980. The massive bow damage was repaired at Port Weller Dry Docks and the work cost in the range of \$1 million.

The 222.5-metre-long vessel joined the Algoma fleet in 2011 and was renamed *Algoma Montreals* the following year. It was the last steam-powered freighter operating on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes when it was retired.

The ship has been sold to Turkish ship-breakers and arrived, under tow, at Aliaga, on July 10, 2015. It has been broken up for scrap.

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NIAGARA 2041

Fostering an Environment for Economic Prosperity

Get Involved in Niagara's Future: Attend a Public Information Centre

In the next 25 years, Niagara is expected to grow, bringing a possible 168,000 new residents and 80,000 new jobs to the region.

Niagara Region is making sure we're prepared for this growth through three projects that will help us plan where and how that growth will occur, and how it will be accommodated.



HOW WE GROW:

The Municipal Comprehensive Review will look at the land we have available across Niagara, and will ensure we have enough to sustain our expected growth to the year 2041. It will also examine how that land is distributed throughout Niagara.



HOW WE FLOW:

The Water and Wastewater Master Servicing Plan will ensure Niagara has the infrastructure to provide critical water and wastewater services to our growing region in a sustainable and financially responsible way.



HOW WE GO:

The Transportation Master Plan will look at how we currently travel in and around Niagara and how we can improve our transportation systems, including options for walking, cycling and public transit, to better serve Niagara's future needs.

GET INVOLVED:

Residents are invited to attend a Public Information Centre to learn how each of these projects contribute to Niagara's overall growth plan for the next 25 years, and how you can have your voice heard.

Nov. 17, 2015

Town of Grimsby
Council Chambers
160 Livingston Ave.
4 - 8 p.m.

Nov. 18, 2015

City of Port Colborne
Yale Health & Lifestyle Centre
550 Elizabeth St.
4 - 8 p.m.

Nov. 19, 2015

City of St. Catharines
Kiwanis Aquatic Centre
425 Carlton St.
4 - 8 p.m.

There is an opportunity at any time during this process for interested persons to bring comments and concerns to the attention of the project managers, and to review outstanding issues. If you have any questions or comments or wish to be added to the study mailing list, please contact us:

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If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Special accessibility accommodations and materials in alternate formats can be arranged by contacting the Niagara Region's Accessibility Advisory Coordinator at 905-685-4225 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

The Transportation and Water and Wastewater studies follow the Master Plan process as outlined in Section A.2.7 of the Municipal Engineers Association (MEA) Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (Oct 2000, as amended in 2007 and 2011). The Master Plan will be filed under Approach #2 of the MEA Class EA Approach for Master Planning. The Master Servicing Plan will satisfy the planning requirements for Schedule A, A+ and select Schedule B projects and provide the basis for future investigations of identified Schedule B and C projects.



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- 10:00 am - Dr. Kate Rhéume-Bleue - Stronger Bones and a Healthier Heart
- 11:30 am - Dr. Marita Schauch - Stress and the Disease Connection
- 1:00 pm - Brenda Watson - Cleansing - Be Your Best!
- 2:30 pm - Dr. Zoltan Rona - Supplements for Longevity

Plus there will be demos, discounts, **FREE** samples, health info and gifts from the numerous exhibitors - including local natural health practitioners and natural health suppliers. This is the natural health event of the year! For more information about this event, visit **Rosemary's Natural Choices** or call us at 905-714-0586. Last year's expo was standing room only!

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Information is provided for reference only. For specific health issues consult your local natural health practitioner.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **HOLIDAYS:** Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum volunteers gearing up for Christmas 2015

Volunteers keeping Christmas tradition alive

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

Volunteers of the Port Colborne museum's auxiliary were busy making hundreds of Christmas puddings last week in preparation for the holiday season.

The famed puddings with sauce will be sold at the museum's annual Grand Old Christmas Festival at the carriage house, and will be served along with a warm drink at Arabella's Tea Room.

"It's been a tradition — about 30 years that we've had a Christmas festival at the museum," said Bonnie Johnston.

The fifth-generation Port Colborne native has been there since the beginning of the festival, and with the

museum volunteering in the tea room even longer.

"I've been with the tea room since 1978, then I was put on the museum board. I've been on the board since 1981," Johnston said.

Throughout the week Johnston and several other volunteers were occupying the tea room at the museum as they make the traditional Christmas pudding — from preparation to cooking to canning.

"It's a big operation, we have all of the volunteers from the auxiliary that come, and even some volunteers that don't belong to the auxiliary but who just come and donate their time. It takes about three days to make (the pudding)," Johnston said.

The money that is raised through the sale of the pud-



FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK
Mieke Van Es makes Christmas pudding at the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum on Monday.

dings goes back into the museum, she said.

Johnston cares a lot about the museum — she's the fourth member of her family to volunteer her time there.

"I guess I'm kind of a historian," Johnston said laughing, adding that she wants to see the city's history preserved.

She also said she hopes the long-standing tradi-

tion of Christmas pudding is kept alive after she's gone. The 79-year-old got emotional as she explained that she is one of several ladies in their early 80s that won't be able to

do this much longer.

"I hope that this tradition continues, I'm not going to be here forever," she said.

She said they are passing on their knowledge to the younger volunteers in hopes they will continue to run with it.

"We have a lot of younger people coming along now that are doing a lot of the dogs body work because sometimes there's things we can't physically do, but our heads are still good," Johnston said.

Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum will host its annual Grand Old Christmas Festival on Sunday, Dec. 6, from noon to 4 p.m.

franki.ikeman@sumedia.ca
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LOCAL NEWS

■ **FIRE:** 72% of homes are without working smoke, carbon monoxide detectors

Port's alarming safety problem

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

Port Colborne firefighters want people to remember that every minute counts.

The fire department is struggling to understand why it is seeing an alarming number of homes that don't comply with the fire code concerning smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

As a part of Fire Prevention Week, the department went door-to-door to check on homes' alarm systems. Shocked by the number of homes they found without alarms or with non-functioning ones, fire prevention officer Scott Lawson said the department continued the campaign.

"We started taking samples from different areas in our city and our number plummeted. Right now, we're sitting at 72 per cent of the homes in Port Colborne aren't protected with smoke or CO alarms," Lawson said.

Those numbers are disturbing and upsetting, said fire Chief Tom Cartwright.

"One of the main things you hear is, 'I didn't know I had to,' which is absolutely ridiculous, especially in this day and age," Cartwright said of the excuses he hears from people not compliant with the laws.

When crews go door-to-door and find homes that have problems with their alarms — or none at all — the team installs the alarms at no cost to the homeowner, other than the price of the alarms. Technically, the homeowner could be ticketed and/or charged under the fire code.

The amnesty will continue to be offered on the door-to-door campaign, Cartwright said, but the department will be much stricter in cases where people are caught, either because of a call or a complaint, without working alarms.

"If we catch people, we're charging them," he said.

That includes house fires that are investigated, said deputy chief Mike Bendia.

"You know, I've had people say to me, 'This person had a fire and you laid a charge for a smoke alarm, don't you feel ... how do you sleep at night?' and I say 'Well you know, that person had three little kids in that house. Those kids could not make their own determination as to whether their safety was intact or not,'" Bendia said.

"I have no problem charging somebody. It's no different than if you put your kids in the car and you don't put seatbelts on them. You're responsible for their safety and if that's what it takes to get you to be responsible, that's what it takes."

The trio said that the extra minute to three minutes of notice a smoke alarm provides is absolutely life-saving.

"Most people who die in a fire are found within three to



FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Port Colborne Fire and Emergency Services fire prevention officer Scott Lawson, left, and deputy fire chief Michael Bendia are joined by fire department staff at the fire hall.

four feet of their exit," Bendia said.

A fire doubles in size approximately every 30 seconds.

"You can have home escape plans, you can have fire extinguishers, you can spend time and money on a bunch of things. But without the smoke alarm, all that other money is

wasted. It starts with a smoke alarm. Early detection," Lawson said.

He compared the cost of installing proper smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in his home to renewing insurance for his car. "I just actually renewed my insurance for my car. It's \$1,000 a year, \$1,000 each year," Lawson said.

"To set up my house for

smoke and carbon monoxide detection, it would cost me about \$40 with the layout, but they're good for about 10 years. So that's \$6 a year's cost."

Follow Port Colborne Fire and Emergency Services at www.facebook.com/PortColborneFire.

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■ **HEALTH:** Foodopoly

Win with healthy eating habits

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

Foodopoly provides the right moves to win with food.

Christina Dupont, a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator at Bridges Community Health Centre in Port Colborne, developed the free program, which runs on the first Friday of each month, excluding December. The program was designed to help individuals take a practical approach to meal planning.

Dupont said a lot of people don't consume enough fruits and vegetables every day, so she decided there was a need for a program like Foodopoly.

On Fridays Dupont sorts through bins to see what specials each grocery store in the area has and compiles a list of healthy food options. She then explains to participants what they can

make with the food on sale that week. Foodopoly focuses on making fresh food at home instead of using processed foods or having takeout.

Dupont provides one seasonal and inexpensive fruit or vegetable for each participant. At the end of the session she takes time to teach participants how to use the produce to get the most out of it. They get a chance to prepare the produce at Bridges and take it home.

"One session I bought 10 pounds of carrots for \$1.99, so that was what was on sale that week and everyone got five or six big carrots. We chopped them up ... and they could go home and boil them, eat them raw, whatever," Dupont said.

Dupont found that there was a real need for the program. Many clients she treats struggle to get

enough fruits and vegetables in their diet. She said the reasons for this vary, including access to and not knowing how to prepare the produce.

Many people have said to Dupont they didn't know they could cook something a certain way or they didn't know it could taste so good.

According to Canada's Food Guide, people should generally eat a combination of seven to 10 fruits and vegetables a day.

Foodopoly is designed to show people that consuming the right amounts of fruits and vegetables is achievable, even on a budget.

"The point is to show people that food preparation — although it does take a little bit of effort — in the long run, the benefits outweigh any of the time costs, because you are eating fresh," Dupont said.



MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Christina Dupont, a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator at Bridges, sorts through flyers to get an idea of what will be on sale at grocery stores in Port Colborne, to aid with her Foodopoly program.

Over the course of about an hour Dupont makes a short presentation on what an ideal meal plan would look like over the course of a day. She also answers any questions people might have about nutrition. There are cookbooks available

for people to find inspiration and take notes at the Foodopoly meeting.

Foodopoly will run again Jan. 8 and Feb. 5 at Bridges, at 177 King St.

michelle.allenberg@sunmedia.ca

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■ HOMEOWNER SEARCH

Port Colborne house needs a Habitat family

GREG FURMINGER
Postmedia Network

Habitat for Humanity Niagara is continuing its search for a family to own its first-ever renovation home project.

The two-storey house at 320 Bell St. in Port Colborne was donated earlier this year by John and Stephen Miklos in honour of their parents, John and Zuzanna, who first moved in in 1938 after emigrating from Slovakia.

Renovations on the century home began this week with the removal of old insulation, said Habitat development officer Dawn Marie Cavasin.

Habitat sells its homes to partner families who would not qualify for a traditional mortgage. They are selected based on the need for safe and affordable housing, the ability to pay a zero-interest mortgage and the willingness to give back to the community through volunteering 500 hours toward the home project or elsewhere, such as at Habitat's ReStore outlets.

Anyone who lives in Niagara and doesn't own a home can apply at www.habitatniagara.ca or contact family services manager Sandy Rempel at 905-685-7395 ext. 403 with any questions.

"I know the (search) committee is really looking for a Port Colborne fam-

ily," Cavasin said.

Applicants must have a need for housing and a minimum of three family members living in a home that may be overcrowded, have unhealthy or unsafe living conditions, or steep rent. Habitat Niagara will assess applicants' sources of income and debt to determine if they can afford monthly mortgage payments. The house will be sold based on market value.

Habitat has constructed 49 homes in Niagara over the past 22 years. The 1920s-era Bell Street home is the organization's first reno.

Electrical, plumbing and heating systems will be replaced, the exterior updated, the home's corner-lot lawns will be re-landscaped and its kitchen will be outfitted with new appliances.

At the renovation launch in May, visitors were told the thick, dark wood that frames doorways and lines the stairs leading to the three upstairs bedrooms would be preserved, and that it was hoped that original hardwood floors could be saved.

The selected family — and most other Adopt-A-Day volunteers — is expected to start working on the home in January.

greg.furminger@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @GregAtTheTrib

■ EMPLOYMENT

Jobs program rolled out for youths

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

A new provincial initiative to help get jobs for people facing barriers to employment was officially rolled out last Friday.

As part of the Youth Job Connection program, Niagara residents ages 15 to 26 with barriers to employment — currently not working, not in school, or not enrolled in a training program — can get paid pre-employment training, job opportunities and mentorship programs.

This will be done through service providers offering the Youth Job Connection program, or via Employment Ontario.

More specifically, high school students in the region aged 15 to 18 facing life challenges and needing support transitioning between school and work can be connected to after-school job opportunities through those service providers.

Those same students will be able to access summer work opportunities beginning this spring.

"This specific program is one which will identify students who have particular barriers to getting a job," said S. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley, who announced the event at A.G. of Niagara's Employment and Newcomer Services office in S. Catharines.

"It could be either (finding a job) after school and on weekends if they're students, or just overall trying to get employment."

Bradley said a highlight is the program's focus on preparing for job readiness — "training before they even go to a job."

"They're prepared for what they're going

LOCAL PROVIDERS

- YMCA of Niagara
 - John Howard Society of Niagara
 - Employment Help Centre
 - Port Cares
 - Niagara College
- Employment Ontario's website is www.fcj.gov.on.ca/eng/employmentontario

to be dealing with, and they'll be ready so when they show up at the job they'll probably perform better than they would otherwise."

For employers, the new program may offer financial incentives to lure young people and offset associated costs, with priority given to "youth-friendly employers," said Bradley's office in a release.

Young people who access the program will come to the job ready to work, with at least 60 hours of paid pre-employment training. Youth and employers will receive ongoing support from a program counselor for each job placement.

Bradley said mentorship services will also be available, as well as "education and training opportunities."

"Those are all important for people who have had a difficult time — there might be problems at home, they live in poverty or have limited experience or low levels of education and literacy," Bradley said.

"They might even have had a problem at one time with a law, or some disability or mental health issue which has prevented them from being able to access jobs."

■ NIAGARA REGION

New provider for specialized transit

MARVIANE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Niagara Specialized Transit is headed in a new direction.

Niagara Region's public works committee voted Tuesday to award operation of the service to Toronto-based BTS Network Inc. at a cost of \$1.2 million.

If the contract receives final approval from regional council at its meeting tonight, a five-year agreement will be put in place effective Dec. 1, with an option to extend for another five years.

The service was previously provided by the Canadian Red Cross, whose contract with the Region expires at the end of the month.

Council directed staff earlier this year to look at alternative options for specialized transit, as well as best practices through consultation with industry service providers, said public works commissioner Ben Tripp.

Following a competitive bidding process, staff recommended BTS — the company that came in with the lowest bid and highest technical score.

BTS is a "specialized player in mobility transit," said Jason Burgess,

the Region's director of procurement and strategic acquisitions. The company, he added, has won several other municipal contracts.

The new business model for Niagara Specialized Transit will differ significantly from the existing operation, Burgess said.

Under the Red Cross contract, the Region maintained nearly all of business risks associated with the operation, including fuel costs, operational efficiency and capital risks with vehicles.

The new contract sees all of those risks transferred to the operator.

It also includes stricter quality guidelines impacting factors such as the age of vehicles used and service times.

The payment model has also been modified.

Consultation with industry experts encouraged staff to move away from paying based on the monthly cost of the operation. Instead, the Region will now pay based solely on services provided, said Burgess. Cost was negotiated on a per-trip basis with a projected 2016 ridership of 14,700, he added.

CALLING ALL ELVIS FANS!

"Elvis: Blue Christmas" Comes To Port Colborne



Gino Monopoli stars in
"Elvis: Blue Christmas"
when it comes to the
Roselawn Theatre

"I'll have a Blue Christmas, without you... I'll be so blue, just thinking about you..."

Of course, many music fans today can still recall these classic lyrics from the Elvis Presley song "Blue Christmas," which topped the record charts back in 1957. Of course, in addition to this tune "The King of Rock & Roll" scored an incredible number of smash hits during his career number of the 1950's to the 1970's, including "Jailhouse Rock" "Hound Dog" "Don't Be Cruel" amongst many other fan favourites.

On Sunday December 6th at 3pm, the music and life of Elvis Presley will be celebrated in a special Christmas show hosted at the intimate Roselawn Theatre in Port Colborne. "Elvis: Blue Christmas" stars Gino Monopoli in the title role, backed by the amazing Memphis Cats Band, and features Elvis Christmas classics combined with 25 hit songs spanning the entire career of the music legend. Local Elvis fans will be in for a real treat, as Gino is widely regarded as one of the most internationally acclaimed Elvis Tribute Artists on the circuit today. He's been awarded with numerous prestigious titles including "Collingwood Grand Champion", has performed in Las Vegas and Memphis, and been featured on CNN, ABC, NBC, BBC and the Bravo television network.

The Port Colborne show will be divided into two parts, with the first portion of the show dedicated to Elvis' early Rock & Roll career and songs such as "That's Allright Mama" "All Shook Up" and "Love Me". The second half of the show reaches into the latter portion of his career including such hits as "Suspicious Minds" and "Are You Lonesome Tonight" amongst the classics. Christmas classics to be performed include "Blue Christmas" "Santa Bring My Baby Back" and "White Christmas". Gino Monopoli performs all the songs with high energy and a high level of audience interaction. His world-class tribute show truly captures both the look and voice of Elvis Presley. As a bonus, Gino will also host a special "meet and greet" with audience members after the show, during which he will sign autographs and pose for pictures.

Tickets to see "Elvis: Blue Christmas" starring Gino Monopoli on Sunday December 6th 3pm at the Roselawn Theatre are now on sale for only \$30 all inclusive and are available at the box office located at 296 Fielden Avenue Port Colborne or by calling 905-834-7572. Don't miss out on this special matinee performance, get your tickets now!

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **GARBAGE:** Residents challenged to increase recycling, composting

Region pushes green bin alternative

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

You can see the recyclable and compostable materials easily when you walk through Humberstone Landfill.

The statistics are unsettling to Niagara Region staff — 58 per cent of Niagara households do not currently use a green bin.

And 50 per cent of a typical Niagara home's garbage bag holds materials that could be made into useful compost if put in the green bin, said waste management project manager Lucy McGovern.

To divert some of this waste, the Region has initiated a 30-day challenge to encourage people to pledge to use their green bins.

"Green bin material is not, in my opinion, real garbage," McGovern said.



Lucy McGovern, waste management project manager at Niagara Region, talks about the importance of using a green bin at Humberstone Landfill.

She said through a door-to-door campaign speaking to residents, she believes most people who do not use

the green bin believe the organic waste material will decompose the same at the landfill.

In fact, she said, when buried in a landfill compostable waste doesn't have the light, oxygen and moisture required to break down. So it lingers.

That was demonstrated to reporters during a tour of the landfill site this week,

when waste management staff dug up carrots, onions, bananas and paper towels that were buried deep within the landfill for a period of 16 weeks.

When removed, all of the materials were clearly recognizable in their original

form.

Comparatively, they showed what green bin waste sent to the Region's contracted composter Walker Industries looks like after only eight weeks. The material was dark brown, earthy compost.

"I don't think people really know what happens to organics once it goes into the garbage bag, and so what we wanted to really identify was putting it in the garbage bag doesn't help it decompose any faster."

"Putting it in the green bin is really the best move you can make, or your backyard composter to ensure that it gets composted to turn into a product that is useful," McGovern said.

Humberstone, staff said, has about 31/2 years worth of space for garbage left.

Diverting waste through recycling and composting could mean keeping landfills open longer, which is not only helpful for the environment but also for taxpayers' wallets, McGovern said.

"Landfills do require ongoing maintenance to make sure that it's being maintained properly per the ministry requirements, and that costs money," she said. "And we could better use taxpayer dollars in a program that creates another useful product (compost) rather than maintaining landfills."

The Region is aiming for 65 per cent waste diversion by 2020.

"If we can keep landfills open as long as possible for real garbage, as opposed to material that can be easily diverted from the landfill, that's in all of our best interest," McGovern said.

For more information on Niagara Region's green bin program or to take the 30-day pledge, visit www.niagararegion.ca/greenbin.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ POVERTY

Niagara child poverty rates higher than average

CHERYL CLOCK
Postmedia Network

In St. Catharines, nearly one quarter of all children are living in poverty.

That's about 4,650 infants, children and teens.

And it's above Canada's rate of child poverty.

The data was released recently by Campaign 2000, a coalition of Canadian organizations committed to ending poverty. The organization has created an interactive map that provides a riding-by-riding snapshot of child poverty, using 2013 income tax data from Statistics Canada.

In St. Catharines, 23 per cent of children live in poverty, says Anita Khanna, national co-ordinator.

The overall national rate is 19 per cent.

Other local ridings include:
■ Welland — 4,670 children in poverty; 21.5 per cent.

■ Niagara Falls — 5,350 children in poverty; 21.7 per cent.

■ Niagara West — Glanbrook — 2,830 children in poverty; 9.9 per cent.

Poverty, in this case, is based on low-income. For example, a single parent with two children is considered poor if their after-tax income is less than \$25,531. A couple with two children is poor at \$34,742.

It's the first time child poverty rates have been mapped by federal riding, and is meant to drive

CHILD POVERTY
BY RIDING

To view Campaign 2000's interactive map that gives a snapshot of child poverty by federal riding, go to its website at www.campaign2000.ca and follow the links.

home the point that no riding is immune, says Khanna.

"Children who grow up in poverty often become adults who live in poverty," she says. "Prevention is the best medicine."

To that end, Canada needs an action plan to address poverty. A plan with targets and time lines, she says.

She points to countries like Sweden and Norway, with child poverty rates hovering around five per cent. Why? Because their governments invest in affordable child care, housing, and low-cost post-secondary education, she says.

In Niagara, there are many programs that treat the symptoms of child poverty, says Lori Kleinsmith, chair of the advocacy committee with Niagara Poverty Reduction Network.

Consider programs to give children costs for the winter. Programs to feed them breakfast before school. Programs that offer subsidies for sports and extracurricular activities.

"We are generous with our

charitable responses," says Kleinsmith, a health promoter with Bridges Community Health Centre in Port Colborne. "But they're not enough to really get families out of poverty."

What's not addressed is the baggage carried by children raised in a poor family — the social exclusion, the lost opportunities, the stigma, the bullying. Subsidies might help kids join a soccer team, but are they still labelled as the "poor kid"? Do they have friends? Do they feel a valued part of the group? Can the family afford to drive them to practices and games? Do they fit in at school? How do they find a good job, when their family can't afford post-secondary education?

Consider all the immeasurable-by-products that poverty hoists onto children, says Elisabeth Zimmermann, chair of the Poverty Reduction Network and executive director of YWCA Niagara Region.

"It has huge, long-term implications when you raise a child in poverty," she says.

"We throw great programs at the symptoms," she says. "But it's not addressing the bigger, broader issues faced by families living in poverty."

Issues like precarious employment. Inadequate social assistance rates. A regional public transit system that efficiently takes people to jobs. And barriers to post-secondary education.

More to the point, children of single moms, new immigrants and indigenous families face greater poverty. A recent report by Citizens for Public Justice. On the Margins, found that 34 per cent of newcomer families, 25 per cent of indigenous people and 35 per cent of single-parent families live in poverty.

The report ranked St. Catharines-Niagara as 10th among the top 20 big Canadian cities with the highest poverty rates.

Campaign 2000 is calling for the federal government to increase the Canada Child Tax Credit and National Child Benefit, to lower poverty rates among single-parent-led families.

And indeed, there is hope, says Khanna.

The new Liberal government ran on a promise to change the child benefit sys-

tem. It will consolidate the array of child benefit programs into one Canada Child Benefit, tax free and tied to income, she says.

It proposes a maximum of \$6,400 annually for a family with one child, with a household income of \$15,000.

Important, yes. But it can't be done in isolation, says Khanna. "There needs to be a concerted effort addressing issues such as a national early childhood education and care program, assistance rates that reflect the true costs of living, and a national housing strategy, she says.

"We need to invest in children," she says. "We need to set them up for success."

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Child poverty, by federal election riding

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in poverty

Source: Campaign 2000, from Statistics Canada 2013 tax file data.

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■ **SPORTS:** Team wants fans to get involved in launching viral online campaign

IceDogs take a stand against bullying

BILL POTRZEC
Postmedia Network

The Niagara IceDogs are standing up to bullying.

The Ontario Hockey League team will officially kick off its Just Stop It campaign at their home game Saturday against the Oshawa Generals. The team hopes it will be the start of a viral online effort to put an end to bullying.

At the game, the IceDogs will challenge fans, asking them to help them to Just Stop It.

There will be Just Stop It signs on every seat that night and the team wants fans in attendance to take a stand against bullying during the mid-period break in the first period by silently standing and holding up their sign.

During and after the game, the team will also ask everyone to take a photo with their Just Stop It sign, share it across their social media and then pass along the sign to a friend and ask them to do the same.



Niagara IceDogs and staff were at the Meridian Centre Nov. 4 for promotional work on their anti-bullying campaign.

The IceDogs hope the effort can use social media to help put an end to bullying, a topic that hits home with owners Bill and Denise Burke.

"Because we experienced bullying at the corporate level, we've decided to spearhead an anti-bullying campaign," Denise Burke said.

"When it happens to you, it becomes completely overpowering, overwhelming and consumes every aspect

of your life. It takes the focus off what you should be doing in a day, because you spend all your time trying to answer to the lies that have been told about what you supposedly had done or said.

"It's continually fighting battles that should never have been waged. The constant targeting is exhausting, because you feel if you don't fight back, then the bully wins. It's depressing, upsetting,

"And it completely changes the person you are. We found that we became short with our staff, and really didn't like the people we became because of the stress of it."

The IceDogs are also taking players and mascot Bones into schools across Niagara to send the message out to elementary-age kids.

"This has been going over extremely well and we can see real strides here," Denise

Burke said.

"We are also presently working with members of the DSNB (District School Board of Niagara) at the high school level to prepare how to deliver an age-appropriate message to them. And through our committee we will be asking the business community to take action as well."

She said it was kind of the IceDogs to include some kind of a help line for those who felt

as they did.

"Most children and young adults don't want to talk about what's happening to them because they're embarrassed by it," she said.

"So with the help of Bill Media, we have enlisted the Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868) who have approved us to use both their phone number and website on the back of our signs. This is huge, because it just helps those who are being bullied to be able to speak with someone who can offer them support and advice on how to handle the onslaught of emotions that go hand in hand with being targeted."

The campaign has started Facebook and Twitter pages where fans will be able to track the movement and learn more about how they can help take a stand against bullying. Visit facebook.com/juststopit2015 and follow @juststopit2015 on Twitter.

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DON FRASER
Postmedia Network
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diaries are used as the foundation for a new book on her time behind the Western Front.

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That publication, *They Called Her Canada: The War Diaries of Nursing Sister Bessie Beyer*, has just been released by the Mayholme Foundation of St. Catharines.

In it, the St. Catharines nurse — who was only in her early 20s — volunteered for service with the British forces. She set out to her new adventure by sea, horribly seasick all the way.

Then her life changed irrevocably, as her diaries recount in excruciating detail and humanity.

"I really felt like Bessie was a young person who had headed out to do something scary and new," said Elizabeth Hirst, 30, a writer and publisher based in Hamilton, who is from St. Catharines.

"And I think Bessie really didn't know at first what she was getting into."

Her reports document two heartbreaking years of the soldiers' anguish and agony.

In one May 5, 1917, account contained in the book, she writes: "It is an unnatural thing that youth should go down to the grave in the mass... And those marvellous boys do not protest or complain."

"Gone clean is the romance of war. It will never come back. We endure its ugliness in hope of banishing it for all time. It would be a sacrifice to put these surrendered lives to other use."

All the while, this inherently good-natured woman sought little joys in life amid the chaos: life-affirming connections as simple as massaging the phantom leg of an amputee, or appreciating flowers.

"She looked at all this death and injury that was happening, and said 'You know I can't fix all of this, but I'm going to try,'" said Hirst.

"Her courage was inspiring. I don't know if I'd be brave enough to do it in the same situation. She was out in the freezing cold, the food was bad, she was seeing all this trauma, death and destruction, and yet she still keeps her sense of humanity."

"You can read she struggles and strives

for that, and I saw it in her writing."

Richard Hirst, Mayholme's administrator, had earlier showed his daughter Elizabeth Hirst those Beyer writings: "She fell in love with the material and decided she had to write it," he recalled.

"She wrote it, and also designed the cover and its interior design."

Hirst said much of her research came from those transcribed diaries, sourced from the Mayholme property where Beyer lived in north St. Catharines.

She also read from primary sources about Beyer, and studied the harrowing circumstances of nursing in war. Beyer's letters, postcards and photobook were also part of the mix.

Beyer's daughter, Corlene Dwyer-Taylor, said she'd never read those diaries before, noting her mother was a private person. She thought poring over the writing felt like an invasion of privacy.

"I was very delighted someone as talented as Liz Hirst took a shot at this," said Dwyer-Taylor. "When I read it, I saw a side of my mother I'd never seen before."

Beyer, who went on to raise a family at Mayholme in St. Catharines, never opened up to her daughter about her wartime experiences. Dwyer-Taylor recalls her mother, who died in the city in 1950, as "very grounded, I never remember her yelling at me and I never heard her swear."

"And her love of everything was there." Dwyer-Taylor said she was moved by some of her mother's accounts in the book.

"One of the things that bothered her was the young man who had his leg amputated and she would sit beside him and massage where the leg had been," she said. "He didn't know it was gone."

"She was so very compassionate... maybe after the war (those memories) were contained."

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BOR TYMCZYSZYN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Corlene Dwyer-Taylor holds a copy of the book about the life of Bessie Beyer, published by the Mayholme Foundation.



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■ ARTS AND CULTURE

STRUTT show postponed until 2016

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

There will be a skip in STRUTT's step. For the first time in 15 years, the wearable art show will not wow crowds in November with its weird, wild and imaginative fashion.

Fans of the popular St. Catharines event will instead have to wait until February for just a taste of the STRUTT experience.

The delay is in part the result of the W.S. Tyler factory — converted annually to house the creative catwalk of artists' masterpieces — becoming operational again, said Steve Remus of Niagara Artists Centre, which produces the show.

When the venue was lost, efforts were made to try and get the event up and running at the new FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, but timing proved too tight.

"Obviously, it's a complicated time for that facility," Remus said, adding a decision was instead made to delay STRUTT's appearance.

"It's not a cancellation, more of a postponement," he said, adding an event with a different flair will greet the February audience at Partridge Hall.

Described as a "STRUTT trip-hopera," the fully choreographed show is expected to tide fans over until the full-scale event gets back on its feet next November.

"You've got to hold your breath for one year," Remus said.

When STRUTT returns next fall, it will be transformed into a multi-day showcase with aspects both inside and out at the Performing Arts Centre.

In addition to this year's venue issues, STRUTT's temporary hiatus comes as the result of funding issues.

"We're a charity, a non-profit, and we're pretty close to the bone when it

comes to operations," Remus said of NAC.

"Like any business, we have to keep an eye on sustainability of our organization."

Remus is hoping to see reviews of the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program and St. Catharines Festival and Events Program yield additional funding for the local arts — STRUTT included.

Remus feels arts and culture in the Garden City is underfunded and wants to see that support increased.

"That's not to say we don't have our supporters," he said. "The private sector is there, the private sector gets it."

In September, St. Patrick's Coun. Mark Elliott called for review of the cultural investment program, receiving unanimous support from council.

At that time, Elliott said the program had not seen an increase to its funding levels since 2008, despite significant growth in the culture community.

For people who think investment in the arts "is a handout," Remus encouraged them to become informed.

"The research is there in terms of community health, economics, social wellbeing, community connectedness, health of our democracy. Arts and culture helps with all of that."

He urged people to back the arts and STRUTT by contacting local elected officials and stressing the event is worth supporting.

Remus expressed appreciation for the patience and understanding shown by fans during this unconventional year.

"Don't worry. We're in it for the long haul," he said.

"We'll be back and bigger and wilder than ever."

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■ NEW YORK STATE

Whoopi Goldberg coming to Falls' Seneca Casino

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Emmy and Oscar winner Whoopi Goldberg is making a January visit to the Seneca Niagara Casino.

Goldberg takes the stage of the Seneca Niagara Events Center Jan. 22, and it's anyone's guess what she'll talk about. The outspoken showbiz survivor loved stirring the pot on daytime talk show *The View*, and has been involved in several political causes.

She is one of the few performers to ever win — as 36 Rock's Tracy Jordan called it — *The EGOT*: An Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony.

Tickets start at US\$55 and go on sale noon Friday at Ticketmaster and

the Niagara Falls, N.Y., casino.

Also coming to the Events Center is *Dancing With the Stars* Live Jan. 2, with tickets starting at US\$55.

At the more intimate Bear's Den Showroom Jan. 29 will be singer Joan Osborne, best known for her mid-'90s hit *One of Us*. Tickets start at US\$45.

The Bear's Den will also see Bobby Rydell Jan. 16, Gary Puckett & The Union Gap Jan. 9, and Barbara & Frank — *The Concert That Never Was* Jan. 9.

Tickets are available at www.ticketmaster.com or www.SenecaCasinos.com.

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COMIC CON 2016

Wrestling icon Heartbreak Kid headed to Falls

JOHN LAW
Podmedia Network

The Heartbreak Kid has a date with the Niagara Falls Comic Con.

The wrestling legend and WWE Hall of Famer is among

the first big guests announced for the annual pop culture showcase next June at the Scotiabank Convention Centre.

"We spend 365 days planning for the June event, so it's never too early to make announcements," said show

manager Chris Dabrowski.

Niagara Falls Comic Con will mark its fifth year in 2016. It takes place June 3 to 5.

Michaels joins a long list of WWE icons to appear at the event, including Ric Flair, Bret Hart and King Kong Bundy.

He'll be part of a Legends of Wrestling Reunion with Ricky "The Dragon" Steamboat, Jack "The Snake" Roberts and Hillbilly Jim.

Michaels is among the most decorated — and controversial — figures in WWE his-

tory. His real-life feud with Bret Hart fuelled the infamous "Montreal Screwjob" of 1997, in which Hart refused to drop the belt to Michaels in a championship match. Company president Vince McMahon intervened and ordered the ref to ring the bell, which many fans regard as the start of the WWE's beloved Attitude Era. Rising stars like The Rock and Stone Cold Steve Austin anchored a new golden age of

wrestling.

Michaels appears for just one day of Comic Con, June 4.

Other early guests already announced include C.J. Graham, who played Jason Voorhees in *Friday the 13th: Part 6*; original *Star Trek* cast member Walter Koenig (Chekov); and voice actor Alan Oppenheimer (*Masters of the Universe*). Tickets start at \$25, available at www.nfcomiccon.com

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■ THEATRE

Shaw announces casting for 2016 season

JOHN LAW

Postmedia network

Jackie Maxwell's final season as the Shaw Festival's artistic director will be stocked with many of the performers that defined her 14-year run.

Veteran festival stars Jim Mezon, Fiona Reid and Mary Haney will share the stage with recent favourites including Moya O'Connell, Gray Powell and Nicole Underhay for the 2016 playbill.

Maxwell will direct the season's most anticipated show, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, with Benedict Campbell and Corrine Koslo as Todd and Mrs. Lovett. The two previously starred together in 2014's *Cabaret* and

2009's *The Entertainer*. It opens at the Festival Theatre July 30. Stratford Festival mainstay Martha Henry will direct what's likely to be the season's acting showcase, August Strindberg's *Dance of Death*. It will pair Jim Mezon and Fiona Reid as a couple who have been living on an isolated island for 25 years. It's at the intimate Studio Theatre starting July 23.

A huge Shaw ensemble will be featured in *Alice in Wonderland* at the Festival Theatre, including Tara Rosling, Moya O'Connell, Kyle Blair and Ben Sanders. It opens May 14.

Also at the Festival Theatre will be Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance*, with Mary Haney, Julia Course, Fiona Reid and Martin Happer. It

begins June 25.

At the Court House Theatre, Neil Barclay anchors Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, with Harveen Sandhu, Moya O'Connell and Patrick McManus. It's directed by Maxwell and opens May 13.

Also at the Court House will be Athol Fugard's *Master Harold... and the Boys* with James Daly, Andre Sills and Allan Louis. It opens July 22, with Phillip Akin directing.

The lunchtime production at the Court House will be Lisa Codrington's *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*, with Natasha Mumba making her festival debut in this re-imagining of Shaw's short story, opening June 25. Ravi Jain directs.

At the Royal George Theatre, Benedict Campbell, Patrick Galligan and Catherine McGregor join director Molly Smith for Thornton Wilder's musical *Our Town*, opening May 12, while the May 14 return of Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* stars Nicole Underhay and Jennifer Dziloszyński. It's directed by Eda Holmes.

Also at the Royal George will be W.S. Gilbert's *Engaged*, opening June 24. Morris Panych directs a cast featuring Gary Powell, Diana Donnelly and Jeff Meadows.

Tickets for the Shaw Festival's 2016 season go on sale Dec. 5 at www.shawfest.com or by phoning 1-800-511-7429.

john.law@summedia.ca



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■ **ENTERTAINMENT:** Essential Collective Theatre finds intimate space in FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre

Making up in a new venue

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

The first theatre show at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre will be a haunting and humorous drama about a man who falls from the sky.

And onto a brand new stage. "We're very excited about that," says Monica Dufault, artistic director of Essential Collective Theatre, making the jump from the Sullivan Mahoney Courthouse for the upcoming season. "It's a sense of legitimizing our work here in the city and in the region."

"But it's a little nerve-racking. Because we're the first, that means no one has tested this

equipment yet. The sound system, the lighting equipment... If there are any hitches we'll be discovering that fairly early on.

"Like (PAC executive director) Steve Solski said, it's like we're tuning the room. We're figuring out how the room works."

They'll do it with a show Dufault specifically chose for the new space. Unlike the cramped Courthouse Theatre, the Robertson Theatre offers an actual stage and assorted amenities, like wing space and backdrops. It will enable ECT to be more... well, theatrical.

"This will be the first time that our company is performing in a purpose-built, state-of-

the-art theatre venue," she says. "It opens a whole palette of possibilities for us as we create the work."

"The Courthouse, I've loved working here, but it has its restrictions."

With just 108 seats, the theatre will still offer the type of intimate shows ECT has done since 1998. The season opener, *Falling: A Wake*, written by Cambridge playwright Gary Kirkham, finds a middle-aged couple (St. Catharines actors Alex Guard and Patricia La Riviere) who are awakened one night by a boom in the sky. As they wander outside, they see debris from a plane, including a

boy still strapped to his seat. As they make sense of the situation, the audience realizes the couple has suffered a tragic loss of their own, and there may be more going on than they realize.

"It's a very naturalistic piece," says Dufault. "These people sound like they could be your neighbours or the people at the market. They're very real characters, and their journey is about dealing with this boy but accepting their own loss."

The play was inspired by the Lockerbie bombing of 1988, in which a Boeing 747 was destroyed by a terrorist bomb on its way from Frankfurt to Detroit, killing 259 people on board. Sec-

WHAT: *Falling: A Wake*, by Gary Kirkham

WHERE: Robertson Theatre - FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines

WHEN: Nov. 19 to 29

TICKETS: \$30 www.firstontariopac.ca

tions of the aircraft dropped onto residential areas of Lockerbie, Scotland, killing another 11 people.

"The playwright, his best friend was one of the victims in the Lockerbie bombing. When his body was found, he was still

strapped to his airplane seat. He had just landed in this field."

Atmosphere is key, Dufault adds. Something that was tough to maintain at the Courthouse theatre and its proximity to King Street and Market Square.

"Sometimes the Christmas parade is going by while we're trying to do a quiet moment on stage. During the recent Culture Days we were doing this lovely, quiet workshop and there was a band right (outside) playing."

The company returns to PAC in February for its second show of the season, Suzanne Ristic's comedy *Poor*.

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■ **NIAGARA COLLEGE**

Documentary shines light on autism families

DOM FRASER
Postmedia Network

It's a neurological disorder that can make communication and interaction a routine challenge.

And now a group of Niagara College students is set to unveil a documentary aimed at humanizing children with these autism spectrum disorders.

Earlier this year, representatives from the Niagara Region chapter of Autism Ontario contacted the college with the

idea of making a documentary as part of its awareness campaign about autism.

A team of third-year students in the College's Broadcasting Radio, Television and Film program, took on the project as a class corporate video.

The 30-minute *Inspiring Potential* work left an indelible impression on Kalyna Taras, 23, a St. Catharines resident.

"You see real-life families and the struggles that they

go through," she said. "But it's also about the challenges these children have overcome and the real potential they have."

"Even though their lives are different... they're still a lot of positivity and success they've had."

Bill Boehlen, a college professor of TV production, said the Welland campus-based program includes making student productions of corporate videos in various styles for local nonprofit groups.

"We give students some real-world experience with actual clients... these folks might not actually be able to afford having a professional production done, so they benefit as well," Boehlen explained.

Over the six weeks, the team of Kalyna Taras, Jenna Silta, Mark Ventresca, Brad Curran and Mac Kroff, focused on families who have children with autism.

"They were five very generous families, who allowed

incredible access," Boehlen said. "We are all very grateful to them for opening up their lives to the students and their cameras."

Boehlen called the finished filmed product a "very good piece of work."

"We have high expectations, and I think these students without question have met my high expectations, and those of the client."

Jordan Shaw of Autism Ontario Niagara called *Inspiring Potential* a "fantastic tool

for helping to raise awareness about autism spectrum disorder in Niagara."

"The film is so honest," Shaw said.

"This documentary goes deeper into the lives of these families and it brings to light realities that many families often face — like bullying, isolation, financial burden — but it is by sharing these realities that people... will understand the need for support."

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2⁹⁹
 LB.

SPECIALS IN EFFECT FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13TH TO CLOSING THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 2015 OPEN THURS. & FRI. 9-9, SAT. 8-6, SUN. 10-5, MON. TUES, WED 9-6.

FRESH GRADE A
JUMBO ROASTING CHICKENS

5 - 7 LB Avg

SAVE
\$1⁵⁰
 LB.

1⁹⁹
 LB.
 2 Chicken Limit

CUT FROM CANADA AA, AAA BEEF
BONELESS RUMP ROAST

SAVE
\$2⁰⁰
 LB.

5⁹⁹
 LB.

FRESH ONTARIO PORK
LEAN GROUND PORK

SAVE
\$2⁰⁰
 LB.

2⁹⁹
 LB.

DELI Specials

Maple Leaf
 NATURAL SELECTION
ROAST BEEF

1/2 PRICE
6⁹⁹
 LB.

Schubert's Harvest Turkey
TURKEY BREAST

1/2 PRICE
6⁹⁹
 LB.

Schubert's Deluxe
MOZZARELLA CHEESE

SAVE
\$1⁰⁰
 LB.

CUT FROM CANADA AAA BEEF
BONELESS BEEF STEW

SAVE
\$1⁰⁰
 LB.

5⁹⁹
 LB.

FRESH ONTARIO PORK
BONELESS PORK LOIN SCHNITZEL

1/2 PRICE

4⁹⁹
 LB.

IMPORTED FROM ITALY
MOLISANA PASTA

450g Bag

\$1
 each

CANADA DRY
GINGER ALE OR A&W ROOTBEER

Regular or Diet
 Case of 12



3/\$10
 3 Case Limit

KAWARTHA DAIRY
ICE CREAM

1.5 Litre Tub



SAVE
\$2⁰⁰
 3 Tub Limit

4⁹⁹

WONDER WHITE
 THIN SLICED
SANDWICH BREAD

675g Loaf

SAVE
\$1⁰⁰
 6 Loaf Limit

1⁹⁹

UNICO
TOMATOES

2lb can



\$1

UNCLE RAY'S
POTATO CHIPS

130/150g Bag



\$1

CASHMERE 2-PLY
BATHROOM TISSUE

1/2 PRICE 3 Pkg of 18 Double Rolls

5⁹⁹
 3 Pkg Limit

TROPICANA
 STRAWBERRY BANANA,
 or PEACH MANGO

1.75 Litre Carton

1/2 PRICE
2³⁹
 6 Each

ROMAN BRAND
LASAGNA

5 lb tray

SAVE
\$4⁰⁰
 1 Tray Limit

9⁹⁹

NO. 1 GRADE ONTARIO
CABBAGE

LIMIT 5

1⁴⁹
 Each

NO. 1 GRADE ONTARIO
SWEET POTATOES

89¢
 LB.

NO. 1 GRADE ONTARIO
WHITE POTATOES

10 LB BAG

1⁹⁹
 3 bag limit

FANCY GRADE ONTARIO
AMBROSIA APPLES

SWEET & JUICY!

\$1
 LB.

PRODUCT OF SOUTH AFRICA
SEEDLESS ORANGES

SWEET & JUICY!

3⁹⁹
 Dozen